

Pancho Villa, From Bandit to Military Dictator

Now Rules a State In Which He Was Hunted For Years

Kills Military Officer to Protect Honor of Sister and Is Forced to Flee to the Mountains—Helps to Unseat the Man Whose Methods Made Him a Bandit, Then Avenges the Death of the Man Whose Standard He Embraced.

BY EDMUND REHR.

BORN in the little village of San Juan del Rio, Durango, 37 years ago, Francisco Villa, better known as "Pancho," is the latest military star to shine on Mexico's political horizon. Nineteen years of war with the Porfirio Diaz government, with a price on his head for the killing of a federal army officer in the City of Chihuahua, equipped Villa for the part he is playing in the present revolution.

In Villa, many see a future Diaz of Mexico. The wonderful success that has attended his efforts in organizing an army in a few months; his ability to drill, discipline and train it so quickly; the brilliant generalship that he has shown in action against the federalists, all point to Villa as something more than a mere bandit. He has shown that he is a leader. Whether he will turn this power into good for his country or for personal glory and aggrandizement, nobody can tell, but some predict that Villa will establish himself so firmly in Mexico that he may be tempted to attempt the role so long lived by Diaz.

For years the rebel general who now is the most powerful in the "Constitutionalist" movement, was an

outlaw, hunted by federal soldiers and "rurales." His home, if such it can be called, was the Sierra Madre, a range that divides Chihuahua from Sonora. The money offered by the Diaz officials for Villa's body, dead or alive, was never claimed, though scores of lives are said to have been lost in the attempt to get it.

Killed His Sister's Assailant.

Villa's parents moved from Durango to Chihuahua when he was a boy. The family resided, it is said, in the state capital. When "Pancho" was nearly 18 years old, the incident that made him a fugitive from justice for nearly two decades took place. The story is that a federal army captain, captivated by the appearance of Villa's sister, attempted to assault her. Being of the so-called lower class, there was no redress by law for the outraged family. Young "Pancho," fearless and impetuous, took the law into his own hands. He met the captain one afternoon, it is told, promenading near the governor's palace. One shot from the revolver which the youth carried solely for this purpose, ended the army officer's life and from that moment Villa was an outlaw. His career since that time has been filled with little else but wars.

Took to the Mountains.
The boy outlaw, who was destined

to become one of Mexico's greatest rebel leaders—and may reach higher prominence still—escaped from the capital and struck out for the mountain country of the west, where the chance for evading capture by the "rurales" he knew would soon be on his trail were better than in the open country. The full story of the years that followed, years of constant peril, would fill many pages.

Detachments of mounted "rurales," the Texas rangers of Mexico, were sent from Chihuahua after Villa time and again, but always they returned without the man they wanted—and usually they brought back with them horses with empty saddles. In time, Villa gathered about him a small group of men, outlaws like himself. This force, it is said, never comprised more than 40 or 50 men, but each was a fighter, trained to the business of fighting. The guerrillas lived by their arms—taking provisions when they needed them from rich ranch owners in the country in which they operated. It is legendary that Villa never allowed his band to injure or rob the poorer class, but confined his operations to those whom he knew were wealthy and in sympathy with the government that had set a price upon his head.

Escaped From Many Fights.

How many wild midnight rides to escape capture were made; how many times the outlawed band were forced to fight against heavy odds for their very existence; how many times they narrowly missed being led into traps laid for them by their enemies; how many times they were hungry for food; how many times they were forced to fight before government bullets—in short, how many times Villa and his followers looked squarely into the eyes of death will never be told. The story of one adventure alone, one fight or one chase, might take columns to tell. Through it all, Villa remained free. From those who hunted him, he learned every trick of guerrilla warfare and has proved since that he has not forgotten the strenuous lessons that were taught him then.

The mountain country west of Chihuahua City, the country through which the Mexico North Western rail-

way runs, was the scene of Villa's life as a fugitive from "justice." His operations covered hundreds of square miles of territory. One week he might be resting his men in the village of San Andreas, 60 miles west of Chihuahua, and the next he seeking refuge or holding pursuers at bay in the mountain fastnesses west of Madera. As the years went by, the country people learned that Villa was their friend, for he aided them with food many times, and they became his friends. Government spies, working to learn where Villa and his band might be, met with little success, for the peasantry shielded him whenever they could.

Wits and Bravery Saved Him.

It is said that Villa would visit Chihuahua at times, going alone into the capital, when he knew that capture meant certain death. Two or three times he narrowly escaped being caught, but his wits and bravery always got him safely away. As he says himself, "I was spared, I suppose, to help my people. I gave those 'cientificos' some trouble, and I am still here giving them more." His last daring act before joining the Madero revolution in 1911 was the killing, it is alleged, of a high police official. Like the seconds that made him an outlaw, this took place in the capital of Chihuahua. It is said that this official, angered at the failure of the "rurales" to capture Villa, told friends that he himself would go out and "get" the outlaw. Villa learned of the threat and wrote to the official, saying that it would not be necessary to come out for him, as he, Villa, would call on the official at Chihuahua.

Villa called. He rode into the capital one night, so the story goes, and met the official coming out of the police station. A duel followed and the police officer was killed, while Villa rode back to his mountain hideout unharmed. This incident aroused the authorities and elaborate preparations to hunt Villa down were made. Before they were carried out, Francisco I. Madero's revolution burst forth and Villa, for a time, was forgotten.

Joined Madero's Revolution.

In the early part of 1911, when Madero's army had penetrated western Chihuahua, Villa offered his services and those of his men to the diminutive leader. From that time on he became a man with a definite purpose, and that was to oust Porfirio Diaz and the "cientificos" from power in Mexico. His loyalty to Madero and the principles for which Madero gave up his life have never been questioned in the least. When men of a supposedly higher stamp than Villa turned their backs on Madero, after aiding him to overthrow Diaz, Villa remained true to him and the cause he represented.

The history of the Madero revolution and the events that followed Madero's succession to the presidential chair has no part in this story. It is sufficient that Villa fought bravely for the cause. He was in the battle of Casas Grandes and took part in the siege that gave Juarez to Madero and ended the revolution, in fact he is said to have ordered the battle to open. When Madero went to Mexico City, Villa accompanied him and was given command of a volunteer corps in Chihuahua, with headquarters at Parral.

Was Loyal at Parral.

Then, in February, 1912, the Orozco revolution against Madero broke out. Villa refused to join and held his men loyal to the man who, as Villa says, gave him a chance to become a peaceful citizen. The progress of the Orozco revolution and its collapse when Huerta assumed the reins of government at Mexico City, have already been written. Villa's main part in it was to defeat the Orozco column under Emilio P. Campa, which was sent to capture Parral in March, 1912. With less than 500 men, Villa met Campa's army of 1800 at Parral and gave them a severe beating.

Realizing that he could not hope to hold Parral against the army that he knew Orozco would send against it, Villa evacuated the city with all his forces a few days after the battle, taking with him, it is reported, several hundred thousand pesos from the Bank of Parral. Marching overland, he reached Torreon, where he waited for the army which Madero was preparing to send north against the Orozquistas.

How this army, led by Gen. Victoriano Huerta, rescued Torreon from Mexico City and began pressing the Orozco forces back to Chihuahua has already been written. Villa placed himself under the command of Huerta and started northward with him.

Madero Saved Him From Huerta.

Huerta placed Villa under arrest on a charge of insubordination. The real story of what led up to the arrest has never been told, though it is said that Huerta grew jealous of Villa's leadership abilities. It is also whispered that Huerta feared Villa. Huerta is said to have been plotting against Madero even at that early date and feared to have Villa with him, for he knew that the ex-outlaw was loyal to the man who had ousted Diaz.

Sentenced to death by a courtmartial of Huerta's officers, it looked for a time that Villa's career was about to end. But Madero ordered that Villa be sent to Mexico City, where the charge against him could be given fuller investigation. Villa was sent under guard to the Mexican capital and placed in the penitentiary there. He dropped from the public eye for a time, until the news was flashed over the telegraph wires one night that he had escaped from prison and was en route to the United States. It is the current belief that Madero allowed him to escape.

Turned Up On Border.

When next heard from he was here in El Paso. That was in March, 1912, a few days after Madero was murdered in Mexico City. Eager to avenge the death of his benefactor, Villa did not remain here long.

One rainy night about the middle of March, Villa disappeared from El Paso, crossing into Mexico below Valleta. The other day he was telling of the passage across the line to his home in Juarez.

Tells of Organizing Army.

"That night I had eight men with me. We had no definite plan, but had decided to make for my old haunts in the Sierra Madre mountains, where I knew that I could find men to follow me. We had one sack of flour, two small packages of coffee and some salt. That was all of our food supplies. Of course, we were all armed but had little ammunition.

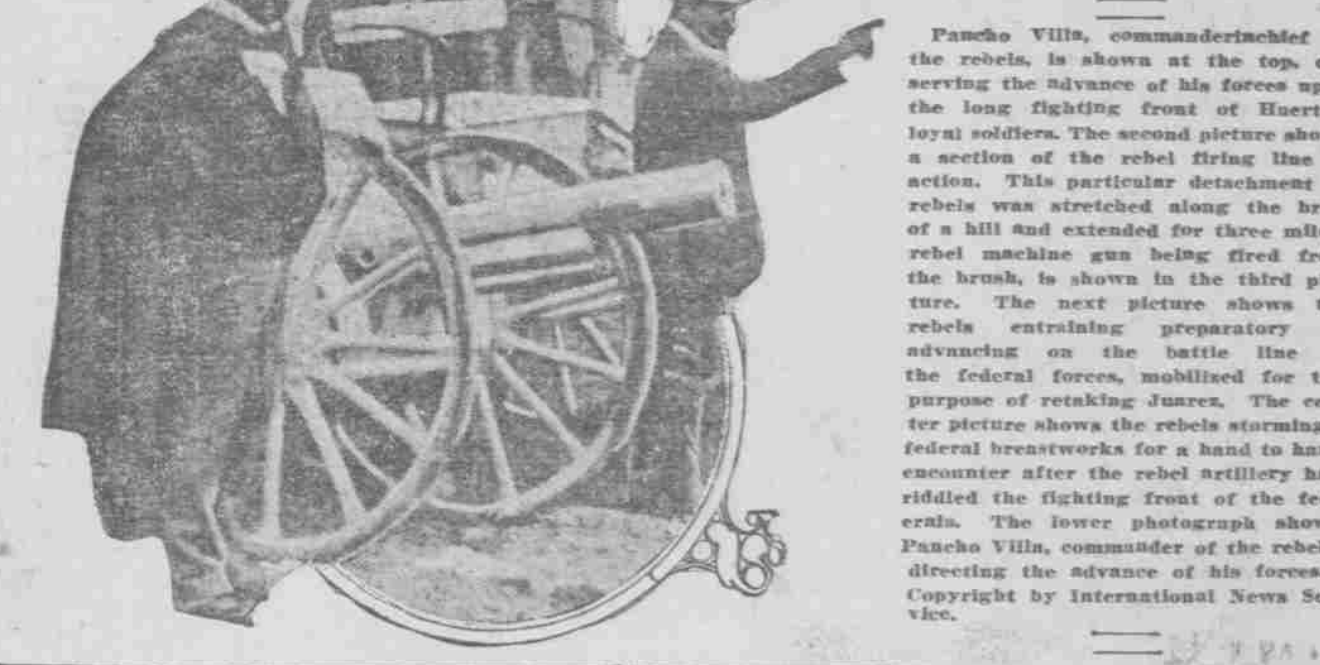
"Now," and the general smiled, "less than nine months from that night, I have an army of 15,000 men under my command and have possession of practically all of the state of Chihuahua. When I first began to gather men around me down in the mountains, they were short of arms and ammunition. Each was eager to fight for the cause, but they had nothing to fight with.

"They used to come to me and say, 'general, we are willing to follow you, but we have no guns or ammunition.' I told them that the enemy had those things and we must take them from him. And we have. Over 90 percent of the ammunition we have shot away in the nine months' campaign belonged originally to Huerta. We had no machine guns or cannons at the beginning. Now we have more than 30 field pieces, with ammunition, and many rapid firing guns.

Learned to Write in Jail.

"There is no need of going into the details of the Chihuahua campaign. Town after town fell into our hands. My men have never flinched in any situation, no matter how desperate. Fired by a high ideal, which made up for the lack of the federalists brought against us, the 'Constitutionalist' have succeeded in wresting nearly all of Chihuahua from the Huertistas, and it will not be long

Battle Scenes Between Federals and Rebels South of Juarez, Nov. 22-25



Pancho Villa, commander-in-chief of the rebels, is shown at the top, observing the advance of his forces upon the long fighting front of Huerta's loyal soldiers. The second picture shows a section of the rebel firing line in action. This particular detachment of rebels was stretched along the brow of a hill and extended for three miles; rebel machine gun being fired from the brush, is shown in the third picture. The next picture shows the rebels entraining preparatory to advancing on the battle line of the federal forces, mobilized for the purpose of retaking Juarez. The center picture shows the rebels storming a federal breastwork for a hand to hand encounter after the rebel artillery had ridden the fighting front of the federalists. The lower photograph shows Pancho Villa, commander of the rebels, directing the advance of his forces.—Copyright by International News Service.

Pancho Villa and the Man He's After

Huerta Sits Tight While Rebels Kill His Soldiers



In the upper photograph provisional president Huerta is shown in the presidential chair in a posture that gives birth to the thought that if Huerta is ousted he will take the chair with him. The secure fashion in which Huerta has seated himself for the above picture accurately illustrates the manner in which he is opposing the efforts of his enemies and the powers to depose him. Below is a photograph of rebel sharpshooters "picking off" federal soldiers during the battle of Juarez.

before we can say that not a single federal soldier remains within its limits.

"I am not an educated man. I never had an opportunity to learn anything except how to fight. But when I was in the penitentiary in Mexico City I taught myself how to write. All day long I used to scribble on the walls of my cell and, after a while, I was

able to write fairly well. Then I began to learn how to read and, with a few more lessons, I will be a regular scholar.

Says His Heart Is Clean.
"They used to call me a bandit, and I suppose some still call me that. But I am a bandit who does not drink nor smoke. I guess my greatest vice is that I could bring that about today by giving up my life, I would do it gladly.

remained loyal to the heroic man who gave up his life to secure freedom for the people of his country. My heart is clean. My sole ambition is to rid Mexico of the class that has oppressed her and give the people a chance to know what real liberty means. And if I could bring that about today by giving up my life, I would do it gladly.